CineFiles
University of California
Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive

Document Citation

Title	**An underground classic**
Author(s)	Pauline Kael
Source	*San Francisco Chronicle*
Date	
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Scorpio rising, Anger, Kenneth, 1964

WARNING: This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)

An Underground Classic

"Scorpio Rising," Kenneth Anger's film collage depicting the motorcycle cult, is now considered by many to be a classic of Underground motion pictures.

Recently it opened at an uptown film theater in New York City, a revolutionary billing for an underground production. It is also being shown as the second feature at the Presidio, where "I, a Woman" is the first feature.

As is usually the case with Underground films, it is made up of a variety of footage, and there is no simple chronology for its pattern. The ritual of a cyclist getting dressed, donning his chains and cap with utmost gravity after he has read several comic strips, brutal and cruel horseplay at a meeting, the swoop and roar of the cycles at a meet are part of the film.

Anger makes no attempt to sentimentalize the cyclists, nor to find any lyric quality in their curious existence. "They are a cult of arrested adolescents" he believes. But from the scraps which form the mosaic he presents comes a memorable and disturbing portrayal of what a cyclist may be like.

Providing another facet of his behavior and his dreams are clips from old motion pictures: Marlon Brando in "The Wild Ones" and a silent film of Christ and His disciples, as well as quick shots of Hitler.

One flash of Mickey Rooney is present. This is Mickey in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in which Anger, when about four years old, played the boy Oberon and Titania fight about.

Anger made "Scorpio" for about $10,000, and it won for him a $10,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, much of which he has spent on "Lucifer Rising," a film he has not yet completed.

In "Scorpio" the homosexuality of the cyclist group is also illuminated. Anger shot the film in 1962, spending three weeks with a Brooklyn motorcycle club. He explains that because "Scorpio is the house of death and also a sexual sign," he chose it to provide a symbol throughout his film. Anger's picture, which runs for about a half hour, is an interesting demonstration of the versatility of the motion picture camera.

P.K.

WARNING: This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)